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AUTHOR Urzillo, Robert; And Others
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ABSTRACT

As the year 2000 approaches, the need for rural schools to rise to the challenges of the future becomes more pressing. This paper articulates: (1) the concept of inter-state collaboration in teacher education; (2) how colleges and public schools can work together to meet the needs of students in rural areas; (3) the New York State and Vermont Service Agreement; (4) student teaching; (5) continuing professional development of teachers; and (6) prospects of shared technological resources. These and other related topics are examined in light of "A New Compact for Learning: Improving Public Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education Results in the 1990s," published by the New York State Education Department. Collaborative ventures have begun to be instrumental in changing the way colleges and schools perceive each other. Broader outlooks begin to emerge as professional educators at both levels make efforts to empower each other to take on new responsibilities. The concept of collaboration, as it matures, becomes a major vehicle as well as a clearinghouse for new and innovative ideas.
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D. R. Murray

Inter-State Collaboration in The Era of A New Compact for Learning

A Presentation to the New York State Association of Teacher Educators, 1993 Spring Conference,
Syracuse, New York

By: Dr. Robert Urzillo, Superintendent, Granville Central Schools,
Granville, NY, Dr. David R. Murray, Castleton State College, Castleton, VT
and Dr. Robert Forest, Castleton State College, Castleton, VT

Abstract:

As we approach the year 2000, the need for rural schools to rise to the challenges of the future becomes more pressing. To address these educational ventures in the population areas of the cities and their surrounding suburbs across New York state, public schools have been able to draw expertise from nearby institutions of higher education. Due to their relatively distant location, many rural schools, on the other hand, are not so fortunate. Although the Granville Central School District is located in the Adirondacks of Northeastern New York, the nearest New York State teacher education institution is some ninety miles away. However, over the years, the Granville Central School District has developed a working relationship with Castleton State College in neighboring Vermont where many of the teacher education candidates are New York state residents. The teachers of the rural Adirondack area and those of the Green Mountain area have similar regional needs and working in a collaborative manner has allowed them to focus on service to the area rather than on arbitrary state boundaries which separate them in geopolitical terms.

The objective of this presentation is to articulate the concept of inter-state collaboration in teacher education and how colleges and schools can work together to address the needs of improving the quality of school environments in light of *A New Compact for Learning*, and at the same time, improve the state of teacher education for candidates from both up-state New York and the state of Vermont.

Collaborative ventures have begun to be instrumental in changing the way colleges and schools perceive each other. Broader outlooks begin to emerge as professional educators at both levels make efforts to empower each other to take on new and exciting responsibilities. The concept of collaboration, as it matures, becomes a major vehicle as well as a clearinghouse for new and innovative ideas; creative ideas that help rural populations to meet the needs of the future.

Introduction:

This presentation will briefly discuss college and school collaboration within the historical context of the inter-state compact agreement; the New York State and Vermont Service Agreement; meeting the needs of students in rural areas; student teaching; continuing professional development of teachers and prospects of shared human and technological resources. The focus will be directed towards future aspirations. In addition, these and other related topics will be examined in light of, *A New Compact for Learning*, and how collaborative activities can help improve education in rural areas. Further, it will suggest that the idea of developing the potential of young people is a shared concern that extends far beyond geographic boundaries.

Background on Inter-State Agreement

In 1957, when Dr. Richard Dundas, a Harvard graduate, who had held several administrative positions at the University of Connecticut, became president of Castleton Teachers College, Castleton, Vermont, he had as a primary goal to establish a broadly based liberal arts curriculum extending beyond teacher education. As he established this foundation, the college drew a much larger and broader based student body. Consequently, enrollment of out-of-state students increased. Many of these out-of-state students came not only from New York but from the adjacent region which is within driving distance of the Castleton campus.

The increase in the number of students from the New York side of the boarder brought with it an increased interest in the Castleton Teacher Education Program by the adjacent New York superintendents who desired to recruit the graduates. In addition, a large number of Vermont educators taught and worked in the adjacent Essex, Warren, Washington and Rensselaer counties while

similar high numbers of New York educators worked in Rutland, Bennington and Addison counties in Vermont. The physical closeness led to many academic and intellectual similarities even though the two groups were technically separated by state line boundaries. Further, in 1972, when the Southern Vermont superintendents and the adjacent New York superintendents were surveyed, all agreed there was a need to establish a graduate in-service program for teachers and administrators in the region while, at the same time, recognizing the limited in-service funds they had for such a process.

A graduate program in education was established at Castleton State College in 1972-73 and soon after that the initial Vermont-New York State Agreement was developed. Dr. Walter Reuling, who was the first designated Dean of Graduate Studies at Castleton (and is presently President of Southern Missouri College), sought to formalize the relationship between Castleton and the adjacent New York counties whose professional educational needs were so interwoven with those of southwestern Vermont. It was very evident that it was beneficial to all concerned when in November 1973, the Vermont State College Board of Trustees Finance Committee passed a resolution regarding the Castleton State College/New York In-Service Teacher Agreement that stipulated it was the Board's responsibility for developing the "most effective level of programmatic support for the colleges under its control" and went on to say:

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| WHEREAS, | The Graduate Program at Castleton State College recognizes and values its long-standing relationship with New York State school districts, therefore, be it |
| RESOLVED, | That the Board of Trustees of the Vermont State Colleges authorizes full-time in-service teachers employed by any school district in a contiguous county of New York State to take graduate level courses at a tuition rate 125% of that charged Vermont residents, and be it further |
| RESOLVED, | That to be eligible for this special rate the student must also hold at least a Bachelor's degree and be enrolled in courses leading to initial or advanced teacher certification. |

The program, which continues to exist today, was expanded as a result of a discussion of the Vermont State Colleges Education Committee to include the following:

Academic administrators - those involved with direct supervision of teachers or teaching - who hold certification as teachers themselves, i.e. Principals, Assistant Principals, and Curriculum Specialists, etc., may be considered as eligible participants.

As the number of New York teachers who were trained at Castleton State College continued to increase (it fluctuates between 30 and 40%), closer work relationships in other areas also expanded such as placement of student teachers, in-service workshops, guest speakers and cooperative grants. Castleton State College has been involved in an inter-state program referred to as the Partnership Schools Program recognized by the New England Association Schools and Colleges and is working to extend this into New York State.

Figure 1
Adjacent Counties



A Common Purpose and a Common Vision:

The idea of developing the potential of young people is a shared concern that spans the educational continuum from early childhood education to the highest levels of graduate scholarly endeavors. That is to say, human development is a universal concept that has no definitive boundaries. Children growing up in the rural Adirondack area and those residing in the Green Mountains have similar needs and aspirations. Likewise, professional educators at all levels have a common purpose to address those needs.

Further, rural schools need to rise to the challenges of the future. In the state of New York, many of these future needs are defined within *A New Compact for Learning*, published by the University of the State of New York. A similar document entitled, *The Vermont Common Core of Learning: Education for the 21st Century*, was also developed, in a similar fashion, by the state of Vermont's Department of Education. Both documents were created to enable local communities to redesign education based upon certain common principles. Both documents also promote the creation of a climate for change that is inclusive, supportive and collaborative in nature. Based on these common purposes and a common vision for learning and sharing, Castleton State College and Granville Central Schools can focus on service to the area rather than on arbitrary state boundaries.

Collaborative Manner:

With inter-state collaboration, like all cooperative and collaborative ventures, a balance is struck and maintained between the needs of the schools and the needs of the college. It is this balance that serves as a foundation for all partnerships. However, college personnel should always keep in mind that they are guests in the schools, at the schools invitation, and their mission and the children they serve have priorities (Murray, 1992). Nevertheless, in a mature professional relationship based on a common purpose, this would be not only understood but would be one of the working principles.

Moreover, teachers and administrators in public schools need to be viewed by the teacher education community in a more professional light. We can learn a great deal from public school educators. However, we must broaden our outlooks and empower each other in order to take on

greater responsibility in regards to collaborative efforts. If both parties have access to decisions related to the challenges facing the education industry, the potential gains will be numerous.

Developing and Sharing New Knowledge:

Developing and sharing knowledge is a vital part of collaboration and it is a two-way street. Openness and sharing are the roots of these efforts. New relationships are presently being forged that will afford public school personnel and college personnel opportunities to work as colleagues in the process of conducting collaborative action research. Other types of traditional research of a normative or descriptive type can also be conducted collaboratively. Connecting important ideas and theoretical constructs to actual practice and examining these practices and writing scholarly research can be exciting for both groups. School personnel need to be rewarded for involvement in higher education and the same is true for professors in higher education who work in the schools. Higher education must view clinical work in the schools as an investment in the college itself as well as an investment in the future of education. Potential college students may very well develop interests in the college as a result of good collaborative relationships. Barriers that separate schools and colleges need to be overcome and more holistic approaches need to come about.

A Different Kind of Professional:

With a broader outlook and mutual respect as an influential force in the college and school relationships, a new type of professional will emerge. Richard Clark describes these types of professionals as "boundary spanners." That is, professionals who feel comfortable and are seen as legitimate in both schools and institutions of higher education (Clark, 1991). For example, school personnel might serve as adjunct faculty teaching pedagogical coursework at the local college or assist in on-going research projects. College faculty on the other hand, may serve on school curriculum committees, as scholars in residence or help teachers conduct action research within the school.

Potential Gains:

Historically, much criticism from both levels of education directed at each other has gener-

ated much unneeded anxiety. This, in turn, has produced many impediments to the reform of both teacher education and the public schools. At long last, both camps have realized that education is a team sport. Establishing real trusting relationships plants the seeds for many good things to come. Collaborative efforts can create and sustain innovation. In addition, teachers and teacher educators can build a collective knowledge base. This, in turn, can serve as a basis for curriculum revisions and create incentives that will build confidence, promote greater participation and a more professional experience.

Bringing School Realities to the Academy:

A wealth of practical knowledge from public schools that can be shared with both undergraduate and graduate students is something that college faculty cannot begin to place a price upon. In regular scheduled classes, teachers and administrators can serve as guest lecturers. In most cases, the insights they share with college students cannot be found in any textbook; they are reflections of realities on public schooling and oftentimes are uniquely personal for each guest speaker.

Public school personnel are often used as adjunct professors who once again bring the realities of public schools to the academic community. In some incidents, undergraduate and graduate pedagogical instruction is taught in the schools themselves with experiential components such as early field experiences, case studies and student teaching as components.

School based research is often jointly conceived, implemented and analyzed collaboratively. The results are published, or presented jointly. Both public school personnel and college personnel share the by-line.

Bringing Higher Education Support to the Schools:

Today, more than ever, there is a need for collaboration between schools and colleges. While we envision such a relationship as one that is mutually beneficial, this section will focus on the way colleges can help the schools.

Anyone who has worked in education in New York knows that we are in the midst of a reform movement. In 1984, the Board of Regents promulgated the Regents Action Plan. This plan

increased graduation requirements and called for additional state-mandated tests.

In March of 1991 the Board of Regents adopted a *New Compact for Learning*. Essentially, a *New Compact* is a vision for improving education. According to New York Education Commissioner Thomas Sobol, the *Compact* promises that the desired outcomes of education will be defined more specifically than ever before and that we will devise appropriate and informative means of assessing whether students are being led to achieve them. From the perspective of a school superintendent, the *Compact for Learning* can be viewed as resting on three pillars: (1) shared decision making, (2) authentic assessment, and (3) standards of excellence or outcome expectations.

For most of us in public education those concepts are new and we will need help in the development and implementation of each area. Therefore, the role of the college can be a trainer as well as a collaborator, in assisting the public school with fulfilling its responsibilities under the *Compact*.

Needless to say, we are in a historic era. If education is to change and improve, we must share decision making, develop standards of excellence and assess students in a way that actually measures performance. Obviously, if those things were taking place, the *New Compact* would be unnecessary — but they are not occurring.

First, it is incumbent upon the public schools to familiarize the colleges with the *Compact* and all of its provisions. College faculty can be invited to faculty sessions about the *Compact* and they should be given literature pertaining to the topic.

Second, the colleges must offer their expertise in the areas that directly affect the implementation of the *New Compact for Learning*. A close working relationship in areas specific to the *Compact* would be the best starting ground.

Third, to effectuate this working relationship, the local school districts should enter into a contractual relationship that organizes in-service programs, again specific to aspects on the *Compact*, in local school districts. In turn, the colleges must give those participants graduate level credit.

Fourth, the type of in-service programs offered for graduate level credit should be specific to the needs of the schools in relationship to state mandates. The programs offered must teach about restructuring, collaboration, site-based management, world-class standards, the development of

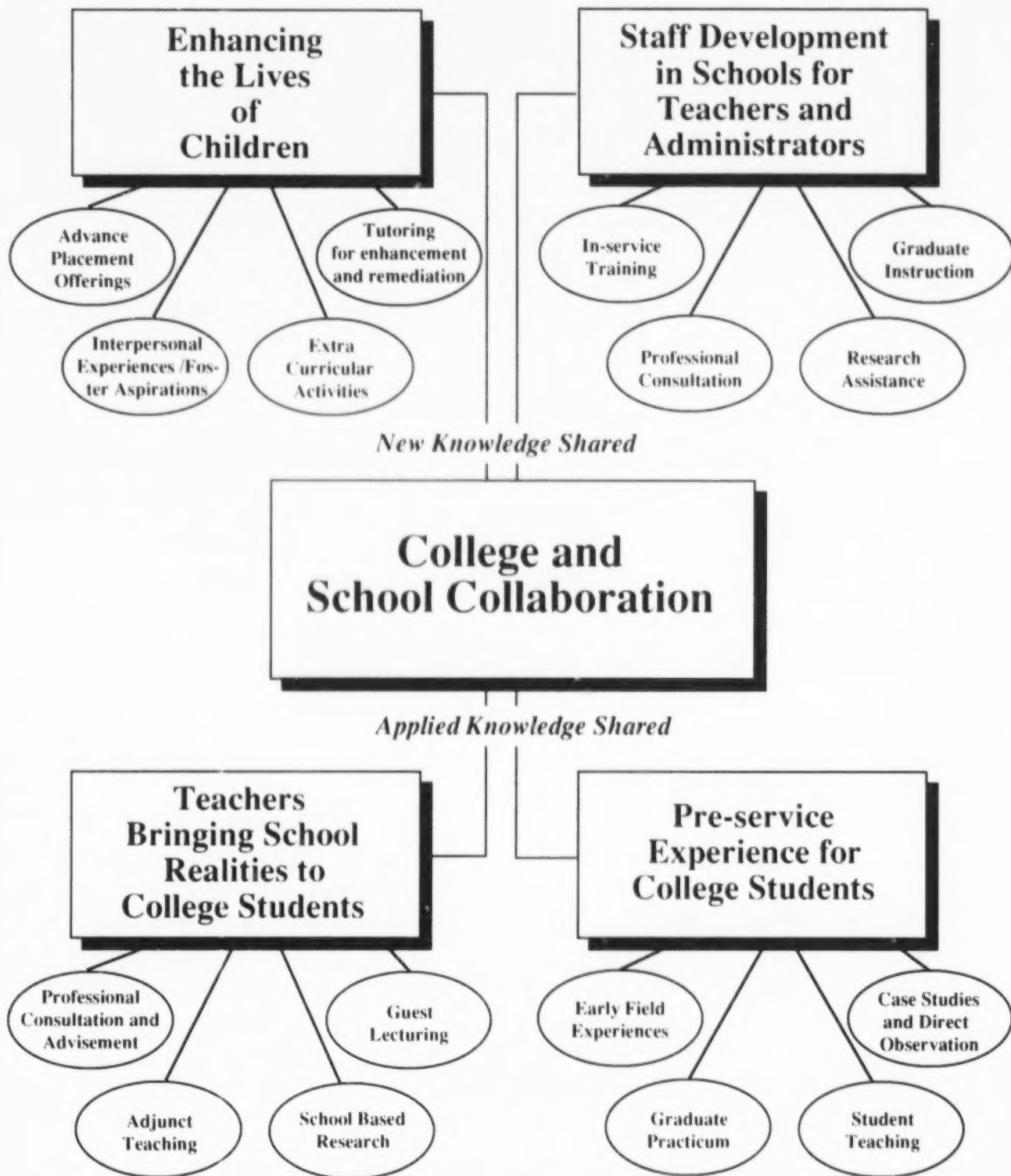
frameworks for outcome expectations, assessing students in an authentic manner, developing consensus, and a myriad of other issues and concerns that now face New York schools.

Fifth, the close working relationship between the school district and college will also assist institutions of higher education. Each professor who works with the elementary and secondary faculty will now have the opportunity to gauge the needs of teachers, as well as their respective strengths and weaknesses. This, in turn, should strengthen the teacher education programs. Additionally, it is not only professors from the education school who can participate in the in-service program. There is also a role for those in the arts and sciences. This will be particularly true in generating ideas for subject level outcome expectations. This too should help those professors when they teach prospective educators.

When we think about the role of collaborating across state lines, another factor must be taken into consideration. With the advent of the educational reform movement, each state appears to have taken different paths toward improvement. Although there are groups advocating national standards, we still seem to be operating under the auspices of state legislation. Hence, through inter-state collaboration, we can share ideas, successes and failures. This should serve to strengthen both organizations. Figure 2 presents a realistic collaborative model that reflects both the needs of the college and the public school.

In conclusion, it is our collective opinion that the opportunity for collaboration is laying at our doorstep. The foundation for working together is in place; the opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship is evident. Now is the time for colleges and school districts to join together in a symbiotic relationship.

Figure 2
Collaborative College and
School Development Model



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